# 1976 in North West Surrey

By P. J. Baker*

After several years of dwindling numbers of both species and specimens, 1976 was one of the best years on record for lepidoptera in my garden, and in this note I give details of some of the more interesting macrolepidoptera observed.

The number of specimens noted at light was above average throughout the year, and all records were beaten during the hot spell which ran from about mid-June and included the first ten days or so of July. Over this period the temperature at 2300 hours was regularly in the upper 70's and on one night reach 80°F. In a normal year here, about 500 specimens can be expected in the light trap after a good night at the end of June, but in 1976 on most occasions during this period the numbers were up by a factor of ten. On one occasion the head count (which took nearly two hours!) was 4,680, and sample counts for other dates indicated totals of between 4,500 and 6,000. On four nights the trap was left switched off, literally to clear the air! Not surprisingly, seven new species of larger moths were added to the garden list, two being new to me and two of which (marked with an †) were new to the North West Surrey Lists (Bretherton, 1957 and 1965).

The season first showed signs of promise on the 5th May, when *Hadena perlexa* (D. & S.) was recorded, an apparently very uncommon insect in the district with only one being noted every two or three years. On the 6th June, the first of several *Elaphria venustula* (Hbn.) was seen, a species that has been distinctly scarce for the past four years. On the 27th June, the first of the new records appeared in the shape of a very tattered female *Apoda avellana* (Haw.), no great surprise as it is quite a common insect in the Windsor Forest complex some two miles away as the crow flies. On that night there also appeared the first *Earis clorana* (L.) in several years.

A small, curiously marked Geometer, seen flying insanely round the front porch lamp on the 29th June, gave me but a tantalisingly brief glimpse of itself before it took off into the night. I then spent much spare time during the next two days looking into every nook and cranny until, at last, it was found at rest in the greenhouse, the first *Idaea vulpinaria atrosignaria* Lempke† to be recorded for the area. After this, the first garden record of *Drepana cultraria* (F.) in the trap next morning was something of an anticlimax.

A specimen of *Anarta myrtilli* (L.) occurred in the trap on the 3rd July, a diurnal insect that is quite often taken at light, though seldom away from heathland which is its preferred habitat. That night also produced another wanderer, this time from the chalk, an *Apamea sublustris* (Esp.). The 4th gave the first of four *Cucullia absinthii* (L.), which moth first appeared in the garden in 1975, having perhaps recolonised the area owing to the abundance of its foodplant on the nearby M25 motorway workings. On the 7th, *Hyles gallii* (Rott.) turned

* Mount Vale, The Drive, Virginia Water, Surrey.

up along with three *Eremobia ochroleuca* (D. & S.), which latter species was first noted in 1974 and has since become quite frequent.

The next notable date was the 10th August, when a fast flying moth netted in the garden constituted the first positive record for *Lasiocampa quercus quercus* (L.). The species was seen flying in the garden on several subsequent occasions, and was also noted as having had a good year nearby on Chobham Common. The next morning produced the second new species for the area, *Eupithecia inturbata* (Hbn.)†, and it will be interesting to see if this local "pug" is established on the small amount of maple that grows in the district. On the 4th, *Cyclophora porata* (L.) occurred, a moth that used to be fairly frequent but had not been seen since 1974. A *Celaena leucostigma* (Hbn.) appeared in the trap on the 15th, the first of this marsh-frequenting species to occur here since 1970, thus indicating that it may still survive in the neighbourhood despite the destruction of its most likely local habitat by the construction of the M3 motorway. This same habitat destruction, however, seems to have caused the local extinction of *Xanthorhoe birivata* (Bork.), which used to have a strong colony near Trumps Mill House.

*Xanthia ocellaris* (Bork.) appeared on the 22nd September after a gap of three years. This "sallow" seems to undergo wide variations in abundance in this district. Some years it is possible to obtain 50 larvae from a fairly small bag of fallen black poplar catkins, whereas in other years the most intensive collecting of the catkins from the same trees will produce nothing but a few *Ipimorpha subtusa* (D. & S.). On the 27th September, I recorded the first specimen of *Agrius convolvuli* (L.) for the garden trap; and, finally, on the 9th October, the first of several *Dichonia aprilina* (L.), also a new record for the garden.

# Current Literature

**Evolution of gall forming insects — gall midges** by **B. M. Mamaev.** Translated by A. Crozy. 322 pp., 79 figs., stiff wrappers. The British Library, Lending Division, Boston Spa, Whetherby, W. Yorks. 1975. £8.50.

This is a translation of the Russian book *Evolyutsiya galloobrazuyushchikh nasekomykh-gallits,* Leningrad, 1968, which traces the emergence and development of the capacity to cause galls in the most characteristic groups of insects. The main trends in the morpho-physiological evolution of the intestinal tract of gall producers are elucidated. The book is in two parts each consisting of four chapters. Part I treats of the morphological aspects of the evolution of gall midges; and Part II the ecological aspects of the evolution of gall midges. A bibliography of 453 references followed by an index of Latin names completes the work.